THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH): (a) No. Sir.

(b) It is difficult to compare capital cost and selling price of electricity per unit of power projects with different fuels as they depend upon the location, technology, capital structure, gestation period, type of fuel among the other factors.

(c) and (d) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

Steps to check falling profits of SAIL

*270. DR. MOHAN BABU: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) the strategy finalised by SAIL for cost cutting and reduced consumption of coal etc. to check the falling profits; and

(b) the other incentive schemes devised in consultation with the trade unions to ensure better performance of the SAIL?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) and (b) The strategy adopted by SAIL for cost cutting mainly includes stricter control and closer monitoring of financial expenditure and materials consumption; greater utilisation of available manpower and other in-house facilities; emphasis on preventive maintenance with stricter adherence to standard operating practices and reduction in administrative over-heads etc.

As a part of controlling consumption of materials, SAIL has taken measures to reduce the specific consumption of Coking Coal which includes ensuring supply of the right quality and quantity of indigenous coal by associating independent third party analysts and escorting of coal rakes; adopting coal saving practices like charging smaller coke fractions in the Blast Furnaces, higher usage of Sinter in the Blast Furnace burden, modernisation of Blast Furnaces etc.

Besides, SAIL is taking steps on a continuous basis to improve its performance, which include modernisation and technological upgradation of its plants, improving techno-economic factors i.e. reduction in coke rate, energy consumption, metallic input, improvement in yield, captive power generation, extensive customer contact, market oriented product-mix, improvement in quality, long term relationship with customers, leadership in service and customer satisfaction, strict control and monitoring of operating costs, higher productivity and greater autonomy to field officers, etc.

The incentive schemes which have been primary production based are being reoriented, in consultation with the Trade Unions, to make them focus more on current priority areas of cost reduction and quality improvement.

Sick and closed industrial units in the country

*271. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of sick and closed industrial units in the country as per the latest estimates;

(b) the aggregate book value as well as the current market value of capital assets locked up in these units; and

(c) the total outstanding liabilities of these units to banks and other financial institutions?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) Data on sick industrial units assisted by banks in the country is compiled by the Reserve Bank of India. According to the latest available report as at the end of March, 1996, the position of industrial sickness in the country and the outstanding bank credit is as follows:

(Rs. in crores)

	Category	No. of units	Outstanding Bank Credit
1.	SSI Sick	262376	3721.94
2.	Non-SSI Sick	1956	8823.19
3.	Non-SSI Weak	418	1203.12
	TOTAL :	2,64,750	13,748. 25

The data on aggregate book value/current market value of capital assets locked up in sick/closed units is not centrally maintained.

Misuse of Scheduled Caste Act by some states

*272. SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI:

SHRI GAYA SINGH:

Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Scheduled Caste Act has been misused in some States; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps being taken to check the same?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA): (a) and (b) The State Government of Assam, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal and the UT Admn. of Andaman & Nicobar, Chandigarh and Lakshawdeep have stated that the Scheduled Caste Act has not been misused in their respective State/UT. The State Govt. of Maharashtra has informed that sometimes cases were filed by the members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on extraneous consideration under the PCR Act and the SCs and STs (POA) Act. Govt. of Maharashtra has decided to recommend to the Courts, as per provisions laid down in Sec. 321 of the Criminal Procedure Code withdrawals of prosecutions based on alleged offences of trivial nature wherein no loss of life, or property or offences of serious nature were involved.

Coal based power plants

*273. SHRI RAJ NATH SINGH:
SHRIMATI MALTI SHARMA:

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) the number of coal based power plants in the country;